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## ABSTRACT

Sixteen readings, intended for fifth grade students, describe New York City from 1628 through 1845. Arranged chronologically, the readings, many of which are secondary materials, show changes and development within the city from its beginning in 1628 as a farming community called New Amsterdam to its growth as a commercial city by 1845. Topics are related to how many made his living in farming, fruit growing, ranching, business, and labor, and to the changes occurring from growth. A description is given of life itself in the city--streets, hotels, houses, disasters, inventions, travel, sanitary conditions, water supply, commercial activity, and other aspects. (SJM)

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Grade Five  
Unit: New York

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## SELECTED READINGS

on

NEW YORK CITY

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CARGO LIST OF SHIP SAILING FROM NEW AMSTERDAM TO  
NETHERLANDS, 1626

7246 beaver skins,  
178 half otter skins,  
675 otter skins,  
48 mink skins,

36 wildcat skins,  
33 minks,  
34 rat skins,  
Much oak timber and nut-wood.

## NEW AMSTERDAM IN 1628\*

In the year 1628, there already resided on the Island of the Manhates, two hundred and seventy. . . men, women and children, under Governor Minuit. . . . But as the land. . . could not be properly cultivated. . . /because of the small/ population, the. . . Directors of the West India Company. . . /decided/ to grant. . . Privileges. . . to all Individuals who should plant any Colonies or Cattle in New Netherland.

After Minuit purchased the island of Manhattan, no time was lost in providing for the security of the settlement. The engineer, Krign Frederijcke, staked out a fort on the southern point of the island to which the name Fort Amsterdam was given. The Company's counting-house was a stone building with a thatched roof, but the other houses were of wood. . . . there were about thirty houses on the east side of the river. Frances Moelmacker began to build a horse mill with a large room above to be used as a meeting-place for religious services. . . .

Each colonist had his own farm on the Company's land, and was supplied with cows; but the milk was for his own profit. These temporary homes were outside the Fort; but as soon as that should be completed the people intended to reside within its walls, for the sake of greater security. Two years later. . . Fort Amsterdam was completed. . . . At this period the colonists supported themselves chiefly by farming, and any deficiencies were supplied by the West India Company.

## FRUIT GROWING IN NEW AMSTERDAM\*

On observing that the climate was suitable to the production of fruit trees, the Dutch imported both seeds and apple and pear trees. The English introduced quinces. Orchard cherries also thrived well and produced large fruit.

Spanish cherries, forerunners, morellaes, of every kind we have, as in the Netherlands and the trees bear better because the blossoms are not injured by the frosts. The peaches, which are sought after in the Netherlands, grow wonderfully well here. . . . the limbs are frequently broken by the weight of the peaches, which usually are very fine. We have also introduced morecotoons (a kind of peach), apricots, several sorts of the best plums, almonds, persimmons, cornelian cherries, figs, several sorts of currants, calissiens and thorn apples. . . .

. . . .

Orchards, as we have seen, had become not only numerous but valuable possessions of the Dutch colonists. . . . When the Labadist Fathers visited the country in 1679-1680, they were perfectly amazed at the fine specimens of pears, apples, and peaches offered to them, and the abundance. This fruit they describe as "exceedingly fair and good and pleasant to the taste; much better than that in Holland or elsewhere." They saw many gardens on the island of Manhattan and on Long Island so laden with apples, peaches, and other fruit that "one might doubt whether there were more leaves or fruit on them." They confessed they had never seen in Europe, even in the best of seasons, anything to equal it; for though "quantities had fallen off, the trees were still as full as they could bear." Again they were astonished to find peach trees "all laden with fruit to breaking down, and many of them actually broken down"; while hogs and other animals were enjoying their fill. On both sides of the Hudson near Spuyten Duyvel they also found delicious peaches, and in such quantities that the road was lined with them and they were told that the hogs were so satiated with them that they would not eat any more. Here they also found blue grapes "as sweet and good as any in Fatherland." . . . . "The wife showed us pears larger than the fist, picked from a three years graft, which had borne forty of them."

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\*From Esther Singleton, Dutch New York (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1909), pp. 35-37.

## NEW AMSTERDAM AND FORT ORANGE (ALBANY) IN 1643\*

For the garrison of the said Fort, and of another which they had built still further up against. . . the Indians, . . there were sixty soldiers. . . Within the fort there was a stone church, which was quite large, the house of the Governor, . . the store-houses and barracks.

On and around this Island of Manhate. . . there may well be four or five hundred men of different sects and nations: the Director General told me that there were men of eighteen kinds of languages; they are scattered here and there on the river. . . some mechanics, however. . . are ranged under the fort; all the others being exposed to. . . attacks by the Indians, who, in the year 1643, while I was there, had actually killed some two score Hollanders. . . .

. . . .

When any one first comes to settle in the country, they lend him horses, cows, etc.; they give him provisions, all which he returns as soon as he is. . . able; and as to the land, after ten years he pays to the West India Company the tenth of the produce which he raises. . . .

The first comers found lands quite fit for use formerly cleared by the savages who had fields there. Those who came later have cleared in the woods which are mostly oak. The soil is good. Deer hunting is abundant in the fall. There are some houses built of stone: lime they make of oyster shells, of which there are great heaps, made formerly by the savages, who subsist in part by that fishery. . . .

Ascending the river to the 43d degree, you meet the second Dutch settlement. . . .

There are two things in this settlement. (. . . called Renselaerswick, as if to say, settlement of Renselaers, who is a rich Amsterdam merchant) 1st, a miserable little fort called Fort Orange, built of logs, with four or five pieces of Breteuil cannon. . . . This . . . is maintained by the West India Company. . . .

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\*A report by Father Joques. Quoted in Esther Singleton, Dutch New York. (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1909), pp. 8-9.

Secondly, a colony sent here by this Rensalaers, who is the the patroon. This colony is composed of about a hundred persons who reside in some twenty-five or thirty houses built along the river, as each found convenient. In the principal house lives the patroon's agent. . . . There is also a kind of Baliff here. . . who administers justice. Their houses are all merely of boards and thatched. There is as yet no mason work except in the chimneys. The forests, furnishing many large pines, they make boards by means of their mills, which they have for the purpose.

## NEW AMSTERDAM IN THE 1640's and 1650's\*

There were marshes on Manhattan Island in which cattle occasionally got bogged.

. . . . .

Unoccupied land was used for common pasturage; and goats, sheep, hogs, and cattle needed protection against their natural enemies as well as against Indians and dishonest white men. In April, 1640, Claes Groen and Pieter Lieresen contracted to herd daily the goats of Philip de Truy and others in the woods on Manhattan Island at one guilder a year for each goat. In 1648, it was ordered that goats beyond the Fresh Water be attended by a herdsman. . . . In 1644, it was resolved to make a clearing extending "from the Great Bouwery to Emanuel's plantation"; and that all who wished to pasture their cattle within this clearing, to save them from the Indians, should appear on the following Monday to build a fence around the same.

. . . . .

Pigs were incorrigible in New Amsterdam. . . . They did not even respect the sacred ground of the Fort. . . . In 1650, on account of the damage done to the walls of this decayed fortress, fines were imposed on those who allowed their pigs, goats, sheep, or cattle to stray on the walls. On July 11, 1654, an ordinance was published for impounding sheep and goats found injuring the fortifications.

. . . . .

The Dutch have always been famed for extreme cleanliness, but this applied only to the interior of their dwellings. More than one ordinance proves that the streets were quagmires of filth, and worse. As an example, we may quote from that of 1657:

Many burghers and inhabitants throw their rubbish, filth, dead animals and such like things into the public streets. . . . henceforth no one shall be allowed to throw into the streets or into the graft any rubbish, filth, ashes, oyster-shells, dead animal or anything like it. . . .

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\*From Esther Singleton, Dutch New York (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1909), pp. 18-19, 23, 25.



. . . . .

On Aug. 19, 1658, it was enacted:

As the roads and streets of this City are by the constant rooting of the hogs made unfit for driving over in wagons and carts, the Burgomasters and Schepens direct and order, that every owner of hogs in or about the City shall put a ring through the noses of their hogs to prevent them from rooting within 8 days under a penalty of 2 fl. for each time.

Those who have no means to build farm-houses. . . dig a square pit in the ground. . . six or seven feet deep, as long and as broad as they think proper, case the earth inside all round the wall with timber. . . ;raise a roof of spars clear up, and cover the spars with bark or green sods, so that they can live dry and warm in these houses with their entire families for two, three and four years. . . .

After the houses are built. . . gardens are made and planted in season with all sorts of pot-herbs, principally pars-nips, carrots and cabbage, which bring great plenty into the husbandman's dwelling. The maize can serve as bread for men and food for cattle.

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\*From a report by the Secretary of the New Amsterdam Province. Quoted in Esther Singleton, Dutch New York (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1909), p. 14.

## LIFE IN NEW AMSTERDAM\*

The earlier towns in New Netherland gathered usually closely around a fort, both for protection and companionship. In New Amsterdam. . . this fort was an intended refuge against possible Indian attacks, and also in New Amsterdam the established quarters in the new world of the Dutch West India Company. As the settlement increased, roads were laid out in the little settlement leading from the fort to any other desired point on the lower part of the island. Thus Heere Straat. . . [now Broadway], led from the fort of New Amsterdam to the common pasture-lands. Hoogh Straat, now Stone Street, was evolved from part of the road which led down to the much-used Ferry to Long Island. . . . Whitehall Street was the shortest way to the East River. In front of the fort was the Bowling Green. Other streets were laid out, or rather grew, as needs increased. They were irregular in width and wandering in direction. They were not paved nor kept in good order, and at night were scarcely lighted.

. . . .

Broad Street was in early days a canal or inlet of the sea. . . and extended from the East River to Wall Street. Its waters, as far as Exchange Place, rose and fell with the tide. It was crossed by several foot-bridges and a broader bridge at Hoogh Straat, or Stone Street, which bridge became a general meeting-place, a centre of trade. And when the burghers and merchants decided to meet regularly at this bridge every Friday morning, they thus and then and there established the first Exchange in New York City. It is pleasant to note, in spite of the many miles of city growth, how closely the exchange centres have remained near their first home. In 1660 the walks on the banks of the Graft were paved, and soon it was bordered by the dwellings of good citizens. . . .

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\*The following selections are taken from Alice Morse Earle, Colonial Days in Old New York (New York: Scribner's, 1915), pp. 70-71.

## THE STREETS OF NEW YORK IN 1701\*

By 1701 considerable pains was taken to clean the city, and to remove obstructions in the public ways. Every Friday dirt was swept by each citizen in a heap in front of his or her house, and afterwards carted away by public cartmen, who had three-pence a load if the citizen shovelled the dirt into the cart, six-pence if the cartman loaded his cart himself. Broad Street was cleaned by a public scavenger at a salary of \$40 per annum paid by the city; for the dirt from other streets was constantly washed into it by rains, and it was felt that Broad Street residents should not be held responsible for other people's dirt. Dumping places were established. . . .

Within the city walls all was orderly and quiet. "All persons who enter y' gates of y' citty with slees, carts and horses, horseback, not to ride faster than foot-tap." The carters were forced to dismount and walk at their horses' heads. All moved slowly in the town streets. . . .

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\*This selection is from Alice Morse Earle, Colonial Days in Old New York (New York: Scribner's, 1915), pp. 73-74.

NEW YORK

PETER KALM DESCRIBES NEW YORK, 1748

The Port is a good one: ships of greatest tonnage can lie in it, close to the bridge; but its water is very salty as the sea continually washes into it, and therefore is never frozen, except in ... /very/ cold weather. This is of great advantage to the city and its commerce; for many ships enter or leave the port at all times of the year.... /The port/ is ... /sheltered/ from the violent hurricanes from the southeast by Long Island, which is situated just in front of the town; therefore only the storms from the southwest are dangerous to the ships which ride at anchor here, because the port is open only on that side. The entrance, however, has its faults; one of them is that no men-of-war can pass through it; for though the water is pretty deep, it is not ... /deep enough/ for great ships. ... Besides this, the channel is narrow, and therefore many ships have been lost there, because they may easily be cast upon a sandbar if the ship is not well piloted.

. . . . .

New York sends many ships to the West Indies with flour, grain, biscuit, timber, ... boards, meat and pork, butter, timber, different sorts of fish, and other provisions, together with some of the few fruits that grow here. Many ships go to Boston in New England with grain and flour, and take in exchange meat, butter, timber, different sorts of fish, and other articles, which they carry further to the West Indies.

. . . . .

The goods in which the province of New York trades are not ... /many/. It exports chiefly the skins of animals, which are bought of the Indians about Oswego; great quantities of boards, coming for the most part from Albany; timber and casks from that part of the country which lies above the Hudson river; and lastly wheat, flour, barley, oats, and other kinds of grain, which are brought from New Jersey and the cultivated parts of this province. ... New York also exports pork and other meat from its own province, but not in any great amount; nor is the quantity of peas which the people about Albany bring very large. Iron, however, may be had more plentifully, as it is found in several parts of this province and is of considerable value; but all other products of this country are of little account /value/.

. . . . .

No manufactures of note have as yet been established here; at present they get all manufactured goods, such as woolen and linen cloth, etc. from England, and especially from London.

The Hudson River is very convenient for the commerce of this city; as it is navigable for nearly a hundred and fifty English miles into the country, and flows into the bay, a little west of the town. During eight months of the year this river is full of greater and lesser vessels, either going to New York, or returning from there, laden either with native or foreign goods.

. . . .

The country people come to market in New York twice a week, much in the same manner as they do at Philadelphia, with this difference, that the markets are kept in several places, and one has to go from one to another sometimes to get what one needs.

## MANHATTAN ISLAND IN 1789

[This description is from Frank Managhan and Marvin Lowenthal. This Was New York, The Nation's Capital in 1789. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1943), pp. 39, 41, 43-44.

The fairest sight New York had to offer was the island on which it stood. "The rides in the neighborhood of the city," Governor Drayton of South Carolina wrote home, "are for miles beautiful. . . ."If you wished to partake of the governor's pleasure, you would some bright morning hire a saddle horse--or, if there were friends to share the expense, a carriage--and set out to see the rural delights of Manhattan.

Livery stables centered around Wall Street below the Coffee House and near the horse market. A saddle horse was liable to cost a stranger two shillings (25¢) an hour. . . .

James Hearn's hackney stand, the first in town, was in front of the Coffee House; but if you preferred to patronize an advertised concern, you hired a carriage from the Warner brothers. . . . They provided a choice of coaches, phaetons, and sulkies. . . .

No lover of gardens, vegetable or flower, failed to stop at Baron Poelnitz' farm. Its twenty-two and a half acres, comprising the old "Minto" place, lay just south of what is today Union Square. . . .

Immediately south of the junction of the Bloomingdale and Post roads you will therefore turn west and enter Love Lane (Twenty-first Street at Broadway). This pleasant-sounding lane led to Captain Clarke's country house. . . . But you will turn off south again on Fitzroy Road (between Seventh and Eighth avenues) and then, driving down Great Kiln Road (at Fourteenth Street), will soon find yourself in the village of Greenwich.

After walking through the estate and, like Senator Maclay, "sitting in the shade," you will probably agree with the opinion of its tenant. Mrs. John Adams thought about her place much

as all city folk do the first year they occupy a country seat. She wrote:

The house in which we reside is situated on a hill, the avenue to which is interspersed with forest trees, under which a shrubbery rather too luxuriant and wild has taken shelter /the familiar complaint of a tenant/. . . . In front of the house, the noble Hudson rolls his majestic waves, bearing upon his bosom innumerable small vessels. On the right hand, an extensive plain presents us with a view of fields. . . and pastures full of cattle. On the left, the city opens upon us, . . . /hidden/ only by clumps of trees and some rising ground which serves to heighten the beauty of the scene by appearing to conceal a part. In the background is a large flower garden, enclosed with a hedge and some very handsome trees. On one side of it, a grove of pines and oaks . . . . A lovely variety of birds serenade me morning and evening, rejoicing in their liberty and security, for I have as much as possible prohibited the grounds from invasion. The partridge, the woodcock, and the pigeon are too great temptations to the sportsmen to withstand. . . . In natural beauty it might vie with the most delicious spot I ever saw.



## NEW YORK CITY IN 1789

[This description is from Frank Monaghan and Marvin Lowenthal. This Was New York, The Nation's Capital in 1789. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1943), pp. 27-32, 38.

In truth the New York of 1789 had little . . . to brag about. Its 30,000 inhabitants ranked it second in size in the country. Philadelphia, the largest city, numbered perhaps 40,000, while Boston trailed third with about 16,000. . . .

The Dutch were still going strong, even if they had long ceased to rule. Shop signs were frequently in Dutch; in Bear Market, the resort of the farmers from Jersey, a knowledge of the language was almost...[necessary], and it was...[used] for years to come in the pulpits of the Collegiate Church. One half the aldermen elected in the fall of '89 had Dutch names. Jews, English, French, Germans, Scotch, and Irish had moved in on the Dutch--roughly in the order cited, beginning with the Jews in 1654; and there was a sprinkling of Welsh, Poles, Portuguese, and West Indians. . . . Hardly to be classed as an immigrant, one out of every fourteen New Yorkers was a Negro slave. Bond and free, the Negroes comprised about one tenth of the population. . . . [There were more English than other nationalities]; but down almost any business street the names of the tradesmen or artisans--James Roosevelt, Isaac Levy, Baptiste Gilliaux, Christopher Baehr, Collin M'Gregor, William Mooney, John Jones, Richard Cusack, David Cation, Francis Panton, José Roiz Silva--read like an all-American football team.

Sight-seeing did not need to take long. There wasn't far to go or much for. . . . [one] to see. A mile above the Battery, Broadway ran into open fields, which were bounded by swamps. . . . On the East Side a stroll of little more than a mile along the present Pearl and Cherry streets ended in Mr. Rutger's farm and more swamp. Up the center of Manhattan, less than a mile from Wall Street, the Bull's Head tavern and the neighboring slaughterhouse marked the beginning of rural life. Even allowing for the miserable condition of the streets and reckoning in the hills, a half-hour was the limit of a walk in any one direction.

The scars of recent disasters were visible at every turn. Two major fires--one in 1776. . . and another in 1778--had swept the lower end of the town and destroyed a quarter of the

city's.../homes/. When the redcoats marched in, the rebel/s/ . . . fled; and there was no need to repair or rebuild. During the seven years of British occupation trade was nearly at a standstill, the wharves crumbled with disuse, the abandoned homes of the patriots rotted with neglect, and on the outskirts weed and bramble invaded gardens, yards, and lanes.

. . . .

However, by 1788 things took a sharp turn for the better. . . . Building boomed. New streets pushed into the fields, old streets had their faces lifted, bulkheads and fills wrested fresh land from the rivers and the sea. "What changes within a few weeks!" exclaimed M. Brissot during that summer. "The North River is thrust back 200 feet by a sort of dike made of piles, logs, and stones. Everywhere houses are going up and new streets opened. Everywhere you see workmen cutting or filling the ground, paving the streets, and erecting houses and public buildings." The noise of hammer and saw, pickaxe and shovel, sledge and derrick, cart and barrow echoed the hubbub of commerce.

. . . .

. . . wherever you went, there was much to engage the eyes--and feet. For the purposes of transit the streets could be divided into paved, being paved, and never paved. It was hard to judge which were worst. In the few that were paved, the two-foot sidewalks were interrupted by trees, pumps, hitching posts, stairs, stoops, open gates, refuse piles, and low projecting bay windows; the roadway slanted from the curbs to a central sunken gutter clogged with sewage and filth, and its ancient cobblestones sprawled in anything but a sweet disorder.

. . . .

Indeed, the number of streets undergoing improvement was enough to daunt a pedestrian. After visiting the President down on Cherry Street, Senator Maclay complained: "The day was hot, I was lame, and the streets were ripped up a great part of the way". . . .

The remainder of the streets. . . which meant the majority, were in due season a succession of mudholes, ice floes, and dust bowls. . . there was. . . an ordinance which forbade car-  
ters, draymen, and water carriers to drive faster than a walk. . . . The inhabitants of Mulberry and Catherine streets--caught between a hill, the Collect Pond, and a swamp--begged for relief from the floods that came "whenever it rains" and suggested that matters be regulated "so as to Carry the Water through

Cross Street." Touchy New Yorkers might protest that these streets were in the heart of the slums, so what could one expect? But the Murray Street folks were admittedly a cut higher in class; and yet, disregarding grammar and spelling in their indignation, they too spluttered to the authorities: "This Street is hills and Vallies, in rainy weather parts of it are over the shoes in mud, the lower part is washed into such Hollows that it is not passable with Carts and dangerous for foot Passengers after dusk, other parts of the Street is higher than there lower floors by which means there property is Injured."

. . . .

"A Number of Citizens" told the newspapers what they thought of "two such gentell, delicate, and sweet smelling avenues" as Stone Street and Petticoat Lane just off the Battery. The delicacy and perfume. . . pervaded the entire scene. In Edinburgh, Boswell tells us, the householders used to throw. . .

[refuse, and waste from what passed for toilets] out of the windows. New Yorkers spared the passers-by this hazard: the well-to-do had Negro slaves, tubs on their heads, bear it away nights; but the commonalty dumped it in the gutters, together with the garbage, and trusted to sun, rain, wind, and the hogs. . . . The hogs thrived. There were twenty thousand of them on the streets as late as 1817, and they were still rooting at large in 1825. Though occasionally an irate citizen, with no appreciation of the sanitary service rendered, wrote a satire in the press, and from time to time the Common Council passed stringent bans, there was nothing the porkers needed to fear except the strong competition of the dogs and goats.

Barking dogs chasing squealing pigs dodging between bleating goats were only part of the choral accompaniment to street life. At the crack of dawn the cry of "Milk, ho!" and "Milk, come!" rang through the town. The milk man--it was often a maid--carried two buckets suspended from a yoke and made the rounds after a night's walk and row from Long Island or Jersey. Next came the chimney sweeps, wily Negro boys crying "Sweep, ho! Sweep, ho". . . . Then the knife grinders, lamp menders, orange girls, Yankee notion hawkers, ragmen, and wood vendors swelled the chorus. The latter added instrumental notes of their own by sawing and chopping the wood at the customer's door.

. . . .

The general racket was so great that chains were stretched before the Merchants' Exchange on Broad Street, where the courts met, in order that the judges might hear themselves. . . .

Chains were hung before Washington's house during the President's illness. On Wall Street the rumble of traffic drowned the oratory of Congress. . . .

. . . .

. . . . The great auctioneers. . . congregated around the Coffee House at Wall and Water; and the block was known as Merchants' Promenade and Auctioneers' Row. The tallest secular building in town was the sugarhouse on Liberty Street, six stories high. Its rival was William Rhinelanders' sugar refinery on King George (William) Street, four stories and a loft; and Mr. Rhinelanders, the sugar boiler himself, lived next door at No. 21. Many men of affairs, in fact, lived above or close by their office, factory, or shop.

. . . .

. . . it is growing late. The cows must be coming home down Broadway; it is time for the watchmen to don their varnished hats and march to their posts, for the lamplighters to fumble with their tinderboxes, and for a weary tourist to go to supper and bed. It is safer, too. The rare street lamps are lit only on moonless nights--that is, unless it rains, when of course nobody will be abroad--and a pump handle or a pig is something to remember if you hit it in the dark.

## NEW YORK'S BUSINESSES IN 1789

/This description is from Frank Managhan and Marvin Lowenthal. This Was New York, The Nation's Capital in 1789. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1943, pp. 46, 66, 68-73, 77-78, 80-82.7

New York City in 1789 is a paradise for shoppers. . . . Tradesmen are busy again, and merchants have stocked their shelves with the best European importations. New shops are being opened.

. . . .

New York has more than a dozen publishers and booksellers. Each of them combines activities in several related fields. Robert Hodge, at the corner of King and Queen streets, publishes a few books, imports varied stocks from Paris and London, and offers for sale "an excellent assortment of stationery" which includes knives, message cards, and shoe buckles. The publishers of newspapers are often book publishers as well as general printers and stationers. In truth there is not yet enough profit in any single field to justify specialization.

. . . .

In the year that the United States embarked upon its "more perfect union," how did New Yorkers make a living and how much of a living was it? The answer is simple and was evident at almost every street end. As for well over a century before and almost a half century to come, they lived directly or indirectly from their waterfront and its ships.

When the brig Polly . . . . tied up at Hallet's Wharf, fifty-four days out of Copenhagen, she brought more than bales of merchandise in her hold and gains for her owners on Cherry Street. She brought, as well, interest to the Bank of New York. She brought commissions to the auctioneers of her cargo on Wall Street. She brought profits to the wholesale houses on William Street and then to the retailers on Nassau. . . . She brought wharfage fees--seven shillings sixpence a day--to the owners of the Slip. She brought repair jobs to the caulkers, sailmakers, sawyers, riggers, brass foundery, shipwrights, carpenters, and joiners on Water Street, and, for her crew. . . . She brought work to longshoremen, carters, blacksmiths, and wheelwrights. Before she was loaded again and had sailed, she distributed pounds or pence by . . . various7



channels not only to the butcher, baker, and candlestick maker, but to Aaron Burr, attorney at law, and to the Dutch doughnut woman in Old Swago Market. Hudson Valley farmers and Jersey millers used the Polly to turn their wheat and flour into plows, knives, or cash. Old Hayman Levy and young Jacob Astor, fur merchants, and through them traders among the Iroquois and trappers beyond Detroit, managed to earn a living because the Polly docked at New York.

In 1789, 1,107 . . . seagoing vessels, entered the port; 770 of them were American, 308 British, 11 Spanish, 8 Portuguese, 5 French, 3 Dutch, and 2 Swedish. A few years before, China and Madras had been opened to American trade by vessels sailing out through the Narrows; and in May of '89 a ship returned to New York that was the first to fly the American flag on the Ganges.

But the sea accounted for only part of New York's shipping. Rivers and creeks which are regarded today as mere details of the landscape, and often not even decorative details, were channels of traffic. Scows, barges, rowboats--nearly anything that floated and could be poked along by poles or oars--carried freight to and from the upper reaches of the Raritan, Hackensack, Bronx, and Housatonic rivers. Creeks now almost buried in mud. . . boasted of their yearly tonnage.

. . . .

In his introduction to the city directory of 1786 Noah Webster describes this inland commerce. . . . New York, he observed, "imports most of the goods consumed between a line 30 miles east of the Connecticut River and 20 miles west of the Hudson, which is 120 miles. . . . The whole territory contains at least a half a million people or one-sixth of the population of the United States. . . besides some other states are supplied by goods from New York." Owing to the tradition of colonial independence and to the leisurely pace of transportation, the consumers of New York still thought of the other states as foreign parts. "Imported from Rhode Island," one merchant advertised his goods. A. L. Bleeker, of 208 Water Street, informed the public that he had "just imported an assortment of Broad Cloths, also a few chests of Hyson and Souchong Tea"--from Philadelphia!

The leading exports tell something of the livelihoods gained in the city and its hinterland: wheat, flour, flaxseed, potash, bread, furs, barrel heads and staves, and raw hides--to the tune, including minor items, of about two million dollars in

1788 and a half-million more in 1790. Most of these goods went to London. . . . M. Brissot says that "the English have a great predilection for New York and its productions; its port is always filled with English ships. They prefer even its wheat, so that the American merchants bring wheat from Virginia and sell it for that of New York." Some member of the Chamber of Commerce must have given M. Brissot an earful, for he likewise asserts that in point of trade New York ranked first in the country. Although the city led in coastal trade, it was outstripped by Philadelphia as a whole until the middle of the 1790's. From then on. . . New York kept increasing its lead.

After leaving the ship's hold, a cargo passed through the hands of auctioneers, commission agents, and wholesale dealers. These gentlemen conducted their business after the fashion of a trading post or country store. They handled anything and everything that could be bought or sold. Smith & Bradford, of 22 Wall Street, proposed to auction at the Coffee House Bridge barrels of wine, casks of rum, boxes of table and tea sets, tubs of Chinese bowls, hogsheads of tobacco, and "two bags of feathers." In a single advertisement Anthony L. Bleecker offered to the highest bidder Madeira wine "fit for immediate use," Carolina indigo and rice, China tea, a house and lot on Queen Street, thirteen acres up near Harlem, and "a neat post chaise, with harness for a pair of horses." . . . James Barclay sold at his auction room, No. 14 Hanover Square, lots and tenements, household and kitchen furniture--from andirons to bed curtains--barrels of mackerel and 42 1/2 dozen ramrods. In fact the only limitation upon the auctioneers was their number; the state licensed but twelve of them to deal in imported wares.

Wholesale merchants did their business largely on commission, and except for the quieter manner of fixing prices differed little from the auctioneers. . . . A buyer from Hackensack, Albany, or even the West Indies could easily meet the demands of his local trade by walking into Robert Browne & Co. at 39 Queen (Pearl) Street. There he could purchase--as advertised--raw hides, wine, lignum vitae, boxwood, eighty sets of mahogany bedsteads, turpentine, varnish, lampblack, wax, sheet copper, anchors, beef, pork, butter, lard, hams, flour, rice, furs, and a variety of dry goods. Peter Goelet, iron-monger, carried a line of saddles, hardware, pewter spoons, hair trunks, and playing cards.

The few specialized concerns dealt chiefly in furs or sugar. . . . The big sugar men, refiners and merchandisers, included

Isaac Roosevelt, who set up the first refinery in the land, and members of the Livingston, Bayard, Cuyler, and Van Cortland families.

Indeed, many names now woven into the fabric of the city's political and cultural history or enshrined in its social register were painted over store fronts.

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In 1789. . . the favorite method for keeping and increasing the profits of trade was to invest them in real estate. This involved more than putting money in the ground and speculating on a rise in population. . . . But the boom in building, together with the grading and filling of suburban acres and the extending of the shore line, amounted to a major industry. It helped provide tradesmen and laborers with a livelihood on a considerable scale.

A hint of the scale may be seen in a few typical transactions. Prices are not recalled in an attempt at humor. They may serve as a rough index to the size of the profits. . . of the storekeepers and their commerce. A lot on the corner of Broadway and Liberty Street--25 feet by 90 feet--together with a small parcel in the rear, brought \$1,750. Down further, below Wall Street, a lot with 105-foot front on the west side of Broadway and extending clear to the Hudson River was purchased for \$8,000. 'Way uptown, on the west side of Broadway, between Murray and Warren streets, it took \$600 to buy a plot 25 feet by 108 feet. In the heart of the city, on Wall Street near Pearl, two lots, each possessing 57-foot frontage and over 100 feet in depth, together cost \$4,500. The city authorities did not feel they were getting a bargain--no city administration ever got one--when they brought the corner house at Wall and Broad, with its 16 by 30 feet of ground, for \$1,125; said plot with a somewhat different house is now the offices of J. P. Morgan & Co.

The year before, Earl and Lady Abingdon sold the Warren estate, fifty-five acres and a country house deemed to be the finest near Greenwich Village. It netted them \$2,200. The city sold two hundred acres of common land in 1789 between the Post and Bloomingdale roads for an average price of \$72.50 an acre.

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Rentals may be judged, perhaps unfairly, from two examples. A city house, No. 27 Queen (Pearl) Street, three stories high, three rooms to a floor, was rented for \$362 a year. As



for the suburbs, Edmund Randolph of Virginia, the first United States Attorney General, wrote to his wife: "I have a house a mile and a half from Federal Hall, that is, from the most public part of the city. It is, in fact, in the country, is airy, has seven rooms, is well furnished, and gentlemanlike. The rent is £75, our money." Translated from Virginia pounds, this meant about \$240 a year--and a year when the presence of Randolph and Congress had kited rents and prices.

Altogether the investment of New Yorkers in real estate was assessed, in 1790, at approximately \$5,845,000. The average rate of taxation was. . . \$100. Within the next decade the assessed valuation increased fourfold, at which. . . large purchasers of real estate. . . shed no tears. It was gains such as these that led Jacob Astor to prick up his ears and started him on his way to become "the landlord of New York." . . .

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The majority of New Yorkers were of course laborers. A skilled worker--carpenter, mason, or smith--earned four shillings (50¢) a day. An unskilled worker--ditch digger, hod carrier, or carter--earned two shillings (25¢) a day. A day's work lasted from dawn to dark--fortunately for the workers, the high price of candles prevented it from lasting longer. Strikes, moreover, were almost unknown. The supply of labor was so plentiful that organized resistance to low wages and long hours was unthinkable. Yet some of the well-born and rich were not satisfied. John Jay complained that the "wages of mechanics and labourers. . . are very extravagant." How extravagant they were may perhaps be judged from a claim in the Daily Advertiser (of January 31, 1791) that "many of our industrious small tradesmen, cartmen, day labourers, and others dwell upon the border of poverty and live from hand to mouth."

A large part of the laboring population earned no wages at all, in the modern sense of the term. These were the indentured servants and the slaves. Indentured servants were white serfs who had sold themselves, or had been sold, into from three to seven years of bondage for a fixed sum--which they often failed to get. Most of them were "redemptioners" from Europe, immigrants sold at the wharves into years of labor for about fifty dollars, a sum which just covered the price of their ocean passage. When they had served their "times" they were as penniless as the day they landed.

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The remaining indentured servants were native-born unfortunates--men jailed for debt, dependent women, orphans, public charges, presumed vagrants. The authorities sold them into service to pay off their upkeep or debts, and when their years of servitude were over they had little or no cash to show for it. Bond servants were forbidden to buy or sell anything, to go more than ten miles from their masters' homes, to gamble, or to marry. A bondwoman who bore a child was required to serve an extra year. Captured runaways had five days added to their term for each day's absence.

Finally, as we have noticed in touring the city, one out of fourteen inhabitants was a Negro slave. As few of them were skilled, they served largely as domestic help, roustabouts, and scavengers.

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. . . the initial outlay required for purchasing an indentured servant or a slave, plus the . . . maintenance charges, was so large that free labor--free to be hired, fired, or starved--won the day. By the end of the eighteenth century slave and indentured labor was doomed in New York as throughout the North. Modern factory production and the great waves of immigration that came later merely gave the death blow to already dying institutions.

What kind of living did the wages of freemen buy? At almost any price level twenty-five and fifty cents a day seems meager; and, if life is thought of in the light of modern needs, it means no living at all. A workingman could not travel for pleasure when it cost him a week's labor to buy a ticket to Philadelphia. He didn't go to the theater if he had to work two days to earn the privilege of hissing from the gallery. Even cheap entertainments. . . were beyond his means. He had a hard enough time buying bread at three cents and beef at three and one half cents a pound. At that it must have been wretched beef; for it took ten cents--almost a half-day's work--to pay for a pound of salt pork.

A worker's standard of living cannot. . . be reckoned or described in modern concepts. The simplest food, drink, and clothing and the meanest hovel were the terms of his existence. In 1795 it cost ten cents a day to maintain a pauper in the Alms-house; and this sum was naturally based on the wholesale purchase of provisions, clothing, and fuel, and it excluded rent. Yet in that year, as in 1789, a common laborer blessed with a wife and child had less per head with which to provide for the three of them than an inmate of the poorhouse.

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. . . . In the days before refrigeration quantities of food--farm produce and fish--were to be had a little overripe but edible and monstrously cheap. Children meant, through the seasons, a free supply of mushrooms, salads, berries, and nuts. A wife could be counted on for dress-making, tailoring, and, after a Sunday's excursion in the country, lugging home a sack of corn or potatoes bought for a penny. M. Brissot, coming from the squalor of Paris, its hungry mobs on the eve of revolution, was probably right from a contemporary standpoint when he said of the New Yorkers: "There are no poor, meat and fish being so cheap." European emigrants were amazed to discover that in the New World a plain worker ate three meals a day.

. . . . Wherever a man turned. . . he could find evidences... of the coming machine age which has so altered the conditions of life. . . .

Turn first to the newspapers. In January of 1789 appeared the following advertisement: "Coal Tar--and Black Varnish Extracted from Coal--to be sold for ready money by Charles Wilkes, No. 12, Hanover-Square, the sole agent in America for the British Tar Company." Industrial chemistry was under way. Another advertisement announced "the New Invented Friction Cogg for Blocks--cast and sold by John Youle at Beekman-Slip; being a new and easy method for hoisting a heavy weight." So too was industrial engineering.

Inventions were popping up everywhere. Leonard Harbah, a Baltimore mechanic, came to New York and exhibited to Congress models for a grain cutter, a dock cleaner, and a threshing machine. With his reaper, he claimed, one man could cut five acres of wheat in a day, and his thresher could do the work of forty farmhands. Up in Hudson, N. Y., Benjamin Folger was devising a water mill for roping and spinning combed wool and flax. Mr. Torrey of Lebanon was preparing to amaze the fishermen of New London by donning a strange apparatus and walking on the bottom of the sea four fathoms deep.

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Someone set up a linseed-oil factory on the hill north of the Collect Pond and ran it with "wind sails." The state legislature passed an act "securing to James Rumsey the sole right of making and employing for a limited time the several mechanical improvements by him invented." One of these improvements

was "an Engine far superior to any other for supplying Towns with Water". . . . Congressman Clymer of Pennsylvania boast /ed/ that down in Philadelphia a single furnace was making 230 tons of steel a year and, with a little encouragement from the government, could "produce enough for the whole country. "

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## A TRIP FROM BOSTON TO NEW YORK IN 1789

This description is from Frank Managhan and Marvin Lowenthal. This Was New York, The Nation's Capital in 1789. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1943), pp. 1-9.

Setting out on a journey to New York City in 1789, you consulted first of all not a timetable but a calendar. You reckoned on two full days to get from Philadelphia to New York by stage wagon. . . and not less than six days from Boston. And a day's travel usually meant from three or four o'clock in the morning until ten at night. If you planned to go by boat, you did not reckon at all; you prayed. And when the wind favored your prayers, you might count on cutting the run from Boston to three days and lengthening the trip from Philadelphia by an additional twelve hours. With a healthy breeze blowing day and night, which you never got, you could drop down from Albany inside two days; although with a little bad luck in the matter of weather it might take you nine to get back.

Your plans, however, were simplified by the fact that roads and routes were few, for the good reason there were not many places to come from. Big cities--with five thousand or more inhabitants--were to be found only along the Atlantic coast. A hundred miles inland population ran thin and, at the first ridges of the Appalachian Mountains, ceased. The largest town west of the Alleghenies was Pittsburgh, which boasted of perhaps a hundred and fifty houses, mostly log cabins, and about fifteen hundred residents--and, even then, of smoke. "The Towne," a visitor described it in 1789, "was the muddiest place that I ever was in; and by reason of using so much Coal... kept in so much smoke & dust, as to effect the skin of the inhabitants." Beyond Pittsburgh there was nothing but keelboats and pack horses and Conestoga wagons, laden with settlers and their frying pans and blankets, going the wrong direction from New York.

If you decided to head for Manhattan by land, you had the choice of driving your own chaise or taking the stages. In the first instance you did wisely if you bought a copy of that handy little book, Christopher Colles' Survey of the Roads of the United States of America, which appeared in 1789. "A traveller," writes Mr. Colles, "will here find so plain and . . . detailed a description of the road, it will be impossible for him to miss his way."



The maps, on a scale of 1 1/2 inches to a mile, were. . . much like the guides we moderns employed when automobiling was a novel adventure. Only the main roads were drawn in full. Bad hills, bridges, ferries, and such landmarks as trees growing in the middle of the road were. . . shown in miniature. A symbol which looked like a gallows, but probably represented a tavern sign, indicated an inn, and next to it was printed the name of the host. The symbol of a horseshoe located a blacksmith's shop; and should your horse cast a shoe or your "carriage be broke," you could decide whether it was shorter to go backwards or forwards for repairs. Asterisks denoted gristmills--the gasoline stations of your trip. Other symbols told you the whereabouts of town halls, jails, and two kinds of churches, Episcopal and Presbyterian. Important farmhouses and plantations were duly marked, so "a traveller will have the satisfaction of knowing the names of many persons who reside upon the road," a convenience too when it came to borrowing a bit of harness or even a little pocket money.

Traveling by stage was probably cheaper; anyway, it was more general. But before you climbed onto the bench that was your seat, many details had to be arranged. Packing was a problem. You could not carry more than fourteen pounds of baggage free; and for any amount over that, up to each 150 pounds, you paid an extra full fare. "An American," remarks a French tourist in 1788, "travels with his comb and razor, and a couple shirts and cravats ties." Some travelers did. . . carry trunks; and one such trunk, we know from a lost-and-found advertisement in May 1789, contained "a dark green coat with plain silver buttons, a green striped waistcoat, one pair of nankeen and one of black satin breeches, a pair of silver shoe and knee buckles, seven shirts, seven neck-cloths, three pair of white silk hose, and sundry pairs of thread hose." You had only to add some soap, a bottle of Milk of Roses, "very fine after shaving," and a box of white powder for your hair, and you were ready to go to the tavern and wait for the horses.

This. . . supposes that you had already arranged for money. Good currency. . . was scarce after the Revolution; and it was hard to find takers for bad. Therefore, a day or two before a traveler set forth, he bought a draft or bill of exchange from the local money broker or private banker or from some town merchant who did business in New York, leaving himself only enough cash for fare and living expenses on the road. One pleasant consequence of the scarcity of passable money was the almost complete absence of highway robbers; holding up a stage wagon seldom paid.

Even so, money provided one of the journey's minor vexations or amusements. . . . The details will be spared you until you reach New York and have occasion to cash your draft. It is enough now to say that merely between Philadelphia and New York a traveler's pennies changed value four times. When he set out from Philadelphia, his copper pennies were worth fifteen to a shilling. By the time he reached Trenton, they had sunk to thirty; at Princeton they mounted again to twenty-four; at New Brunswick they climbed to twenty; and on Broadway it took twenty-one coppers to buy a shilling--and, before the end of the year, forty or more. And he would know, of course, without being told, that in Georgia five shillings made a dollar; in Virginia and New England, six shillings; in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, seven and one half shillings; and in North Carolina and New York, eight shillings--and that the American dollar itself did not exist except as a figment of bookkeeping, a fictitious standard for reckoning real money.

But at this pace you will never get your place bought in the stage. Fares were usually fourpence (4¢) a mile, though rivalry between competing stage lines sometimes brought this down to threepence. There was no need to dispute the mileage; for, years back, Benjamin Franklin had contrived a machine which, attached to a chaise, had measured off the distance and indicated where to plant the milestones to be found on all the main roads. The old roads, however, wound and twisted and shied from steep hills or deep streams; and the distances between New York and such towns as Philadelphia, Albany, or Boston were more than one tenth greater than today.

Your initiation into eighteenth-century travel could, in fact begin at no likelier place than Boston, for its post roads were among the most famous in the land. The advertisements of Levi Pease, who opened the first "line of stages" to New York as soon as the redcoats went home in 1783, notified you to "leave name and baggage the evening preceding the morning that the stages set off, at the several places the stages put up, and pay one half the passage to the place where the first exchange of passengers is made." That done, you were free to be entertained by your friends at a farewell dinner which, in view of your. . . journey to far-off New York, was elaborate and possibly tearful. To make things easier, you no doubt suggested that the dinner be held at Mr. Pease's own tavern. . . where the stages start. . . . Why go to bed when you must rise before you have warmed up the sheets?

If Josiah Quincy were among the guests to speed your departure, he could warn you what to expect. He went through the mill the year after the line was opened. He relates:

The journey to New York took up a week. The carriages were old and shackling, and much of the harness made of ropes. We generally reached our resting place for the night, if no accident intervened, at ten o'clock, and after a frugal supper went to bed with a notice that we should be called at three the next morning, which generally proved to be half-past two. Then, whether it snowed or rained, the traveler must rise and make ready by the help of a horn-lantern and a farthing candle, and proceed on his way over bad roads, sometimes with a driver showing no doubtful symptoms of drunkenness, which good-hearted passengers never failed to improve at every stopping place by urging upon him another glass of toddy. Thus we traveled, eighteen miles a stage, sometimes obliged to get out and help the coachman lift the coach out of a quagmire or rut, and arrived at New York, wondering at the ease as well as the expedition of our journey.

But that was five years ago [in 1789]. . . . And if you were up on the latest news from the Ohio country, you would scorn a New England quagmire. . . . Why, 'way out West, somewhere beyond Harrisburg, there's a whiplash sticking up out of the road and, tied to it, a sign: "No bottom here." A family has been camping near by for three months; and when the mud dries, they expect to dig up the whiplash and, under it, their Conestoga wagon and two pair of horses.

It would have been cheering, though, to have that foreigner, M. Brissot de Warville, at your farewell dinner. He. . . was a Frenchman. . . [who visited] the United States in 1788. . . . He too set out for New York on Levi Pease's line.

Before dawn you mounted the stage--a gaily painted wagon suspended on stout leather straps which served for springs. Its three benches held six persons; and if you were spry you seized a place in the rear seat, the only one with a back to it. The four horses pulled off smartly; and within three hours you had covered the fifteen miles to Weston, where you breakfasted. . . on meats, fish, eggs, pie, and cider. Here, as about every fifteen miles, two of the horses were changed. . . . Two in the afternoon brought you another thirty-three miles to Worcester



Following a ride of an hour and a half in the dark to whet your appetite, you breakfasted in Brookfield at "one Hitchcock's," as Washington called it. Here you read the gazettes, as M. Brissot did "while waiting for the broiled and roast meats, the tea and coffee, which all told cost ten pence in Massachusetts money  $\underline{13\ 1/2\text{¢}}$ ."

Then came the twenty-mile stretch down the rocky valley of the Quaboag, where if the horses showed speed you bounced like corn in a popper. At North Wilbraham, while the spent team was changed, you could recompose yourself by "baiting" at the Bliss Taver. . . . "Baiting" meant anything less than serious eating and drinking. . . .

Beyond North Wilbraham the road, dropping into the Connecticut valley, was excellent. "We started off like lightning," said M. Brissot, "and arrived at Springfield, ten miles, in an hour and a quarter." . . .

In Springfield you dined, around two o'clock as usual, at Zeno Parson's place. Then you were ferried across the river, wagon and all, on a flat-bottomed scow; and you discovered you had to pay your own toll extra. If dinner and the ferry did not consume more than a couple of hours, you reached the Adams Tavern in Hartford by nine-thirty, ready for supper and bed, with sixty-three miles to the day's credit.

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Thus day followed day; and if you had M. Brissot's luck, the fourth midnight after leaving Boston you rolled up to the feebly lighted door of Sam Fraunces' tavern in. . . New York.... But M. Brissot traveled in midsummer, when roads and weather were at their best. . . . Coming up to New York by stage from Alexandria the following spring, Thomas Jefferson found "the roads so bad that we could not go more than three miles an hour, sometimes not more than two, and in the night but one."

For stage passengers, however, time never hung heavy.... Every turn of the road invited speculation as to its rocks, mire, sand, grade, and hazards. Every new passenger brought a store of local news. . . . Every steep hill gave you the occasion to be kind to dumb animals, and likewise to yourself, by stretching your legs as you walked on ahead and then waited for the stage to catch up with you at the top. Every breakdown enabled you to air your cleverness or display your muscular tone.

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and dinner; and if you didn't get that back seat, you limped sore and stiff to your meal.

M. Brissot claims you dined well à l'américaine at the United States Arms, "which was a wooden building with charming ornamentation." Washington likewise ate there during his Eastern tour in 1789, after "he politely passed through the town on horseback" in order "to gratify the inhabitants." By special arrangement for stage passengers your dinner cost you two shillings ninepence (35¢), with an extra beefsteak at one shilling sixpence (19¢), and a bottle of "Champaigne" eased your aching joints for ten shillings (\$1.25).

Travelers differed as sharply about the quality of a meal in a road tavern as they do now in a dining car. M. Constantin Volney, the Frenchman. . . growled that "the whole day passes in heaping one indigestive mass upon another" and thought the American diet devastating for anyone but a Tartar. On the other hand, M. Brissot's favorable verdict deserves respect, for his father owned a cookshop in Chartres. But no doubt the attitude most beneficial to digestion was shown by young Thomas Fairfax, who journeyed from Virginia to Massachusetts in 1799. "I have often been astonished," he jotted in his travel diary, "to find such stress laid upon a good or bad dinner. . . . When we have a journey on hand, the object in view is the accomplishment of it; and if we meet with food by the way as often as needful, though of an ordinary kind, it should be sufficient."

With sixty miles for the day's run, you supped and slept in the new tavern at Spencer. It was only half built, but its cleanliness delighted M. Brissot. . . . "The rooms were neat, the beds good, the sheets clean, the supper decent: cider, tea, punch, and all for two shillings a head." Sleep, the little there was of it, cost one shilling in a single bed and sixpence more in a double; and if travel was light or the tavern commodious, you had a bedroom all to yourself.

A new stage owner greeted you at four o'clock of the second morning, for Mr. Pease's "line" was an interlocking service conducted by several hands. The new wagon had neither straps. . . nor springs; and. . . you soon learned why. The rough and steep roads--fifty miles of them--beyond Spencer would have broken the best springs a smith could forge. Even Washington in his de-luxe coach called "the part crossing the hills very bad." To M. Brissot's terror, as the wagon plunged down the first hill he discovered it had no brakes, either, nor chain or drag to lock the wheels. But that too was Yankee thrift: huge stones and boulders in the road made progress down hill as slow and safe as up.

## A NEW YORK HOTEL OF 1879

This description is from Frank Monaghan and Marian Lowenthal, This Was New York, The Nation's Capital in 1789. (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1943), pp. 16-17.

. . . at the City Tavern. . . the landlord. . . would likely stagger you with his bill of fare. A first-class house provided the usual butcher-shop round of fowl and meats and, in addition, game that was no less plentiful and cheap--venison, bear steaks, wild turkey, wild ducks, wild pigeons--besides oysters, lobsters, terrapin, soups, plain and meat puddings, vegetables, and desserts.

. . . . The City Tavern had, of course, its parlor for ladies, its taproom for gentlemen. . . its dining rooms and cardrooms. It boasted two "long rooms"--the name was borrowed from the Indian term for a council lodge--for public functions and monumental banquets.

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For your personal needs you expected. . . comfort without gadgets. Aside from the pump and its handle probably the only piece of machinery in the City Tavern was the spit driven by the draft of the kitchen chimney. The pump, moreover, did not supply drinking water, which was delivered daily in hogsheads from the Tea-Water well, up on Chatham Street. However, according to season, you were warmed or cooled by the two most effective systems ever devised by man. In winter the rooms were warmed by an open fire or a Franklin stove, and the air was circulated and humidified by a goodly number of chinks and cracks around the doors and windows. In summer the guests themselves were cooled and air-conditioned by the application of corn-leaf fans and iced rum punch.

When you retired for the night you called for a candle and, in winter, a warming pan. If you were delicate or suffered from cold feet, a hot brick wrapped in flannel or a lank jug of hot water was at your command. During the night you controlled the temperature as we do today, by piling the blankets on or off; and in the morning you got a pitcher of hot water by shouting for it--loud enough. Bathing was simple. When the occasion arose you ordered, a few hours in advance, a hot tub in your room. Or you walked to Henry Ludlam's bathhouse at the foot of Liberty Street and enjoyed fresh, salt, hot, or cold water

for four shillings (50¢) admission.

In all likelihood, though, your stay at the City Tavern or any other large hostelry was brief. The rates were high-- seven dollars a week for room and board. . . . M. Pecquet, a French innkeeper at Philadelphia, bragged that his tavern was "not like an American-run house"; that he did not put twelve beds in one room, but that every lodger had a room to himself.

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NEW YORK IN THE MID-1800's

JOHN GRISCOM'S REPORT ON THE SANITARY CONDITIONS  
OF THE LABORING POPULATION OF NEW YORK, 1845

A house, or a row ... of houses, is hired by some person ... on a lease of several years, for a sum which will yield a fair interest on the cost. The owner is thus relieved of the great trouble ... of the collection of rents. His income is sure from one individual.... It then becomes the object of the ... renter to make and save as much as possible....

The tenements ... are divided into small apartments, as numerous as decency will admit. Regard to comfort, convenience, and health is the last motive.... The closets, for they deserve no other name, are then rented to the poor....

But the most offensive of all places for residence are the cellars.... You must descend to them; you must feel the blast of foul air as it meets your face on opening the door; you must grope in the dark ... over a broken floor ..; you must inhale the suffocating vapor of the sitting and sleeping rooms....

FROM A REPORT OF A STATE COMMITTEE APPOINTED  
TO EXAMINE HOUSING CONDITIONS IN NEW YORK, 1857

We could tell of one room, twelve feet by twelve, in which were five resident families ... making up twenty persons, of both sexes, and all ages, with only two beds, without partition or screen, or chair or table.... An-other attic room, seven feet by five, containing scarcely an article of furniture but a bed, on which lay a ... man in a raging fever, without medicine, drink, or suitable food, his toil-worn wife engaged in cleaning the dirt from the floor, and his little child asleep on a bundle of rags in the corner....

## NEW YORK CITY IN 1837

[The following description was written by Asa Greene. His book A Glance At New York was published in 1837.]

### Streets

Not much more than a sixth part of the island of Manhattan is compactly covered with houses, stores, and paved streets. The rest is occupied with farms and gardens; though the limits of the city. . . /include/ the whole island. . . .

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But broad as Broadway is [80 feet], it is now quite too narrow for the immense travel, business, and locomotion of various kinds. . . . This is particularly the case with that part below Canal-street; and more particularly so south of the Park. Here the attempt at crossing is almost as much as your life is worth. To perform the feat with any degree of safety, you must button your coat tight about you, see that your shoes are secure at the heels, settle your hat firmly on your head, look up street and down street, as the self-same moment, to see what carts and carriages are upon you, and then run for your life. We daily see persons waiting at the crossing places for some minutes, before they can find an opening. . . /and they think/ themselves exceedingly fortunate if they can get over with sound bones and a whole skin.

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Formerly there were no street scavengers. There was a law requiring each householder as often. . . as once a week to sweep before his own door; not only the side-walk, but also half way across the street, where his opposite neighbor was to meet him. The dirt, swept in heaps, was to be carried away by the carts. We well remember that the householders swept as often as they pleased; . . . the dirt often remained in heaps for several days; or rather the heaps were trodden and scattered about again. . . .

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. . . /New York's/ system of street management is improved. Regular scavengers are now employed; and they may be seen, sometimes busily engaged with their hoes and their brooms. New York is at least fifty per cent more tidy than she was previous to 1832.



## Water Supply

The cry of the citizens of New-York for water--"pure and wholesome water"--has been unceasing. There is not perhaps in the Union a city more. . . lacking of the blessing of good water than New York.

The present supply. . . comes from three sources, to wit: the town pumps, the Manhattan Company, and Knapp's spring. To this we should add a fourth source, namely, the clouds; from which the chief supply for washing is obtained.

The town pumps are conveniently situated at the corners of the streets, everywhere throughout the city. . . the pump-water is. . . impregnated with certain saline salty properties....

The Manhattan water has a peculiar hue and taste. . . . This is readily pumped by the Manhattan Banking Company, which was. . . organized many years ago, for the purpose of supplying the city with "pure and wholesome water." . . . The people can have it the water brought to their houses in pipes, on. . . paying the regular prices. . . . But "pure and wholesome" as it is, . . . the people generally prefer that from the town pumps. . . .

The third source, namely Knapp's Spring, furnishes the only. . . good water in the city. This is conveyed about the streets in hogsheads, and sold. . . at a penny a gallon. Small as this price seems, their supply of spring water. . . costs some of the larger hotels more than \$300 each. . . a year. The hotels, boarding houses, and respectable private families make use of this water for tea, coffee, and ordinary drink. The poor all resort to the street pumps.

. . . . The great difficulty in supplying the city properly is the very great distance from which. . . the water must be brought. Very recently, it was decided. . . to bring. . . to New York the waters of the Croton.

That part of the Croton river from whence the water is to be taken, is about forty-four miles, in northerly direction, from the City Hall. The water is to be. . . carried by a covered aqueduct of strong mason work, to a rise of land on the island, called Murray Hill; from. . . there, by the force of its own gravity, it will distribute itself through all the streets and avenues of the city. The length of pipe, required for the distribution, is estimated at 167 miles.

The Croton water is found. . . to be exceedingly pure. . . . Free from impurities, the Croton water will be a great inducement to personal cleanliness. Having it running pure into their very bedrooms, the citizens will find it an agreeable pastime, instead of a disgusting labor, to wash themselves of a morning. . . .

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### Fires

Among the novelties of New York, there is nothing perhaps which strikes a stranger with more surprise than the frequency of fires. There is scarcely a day. . . when there is not an alarm--a cry of fire--and a ringing of bells.

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Many of the fires, though small. . . require the aid of an engine, because they are so situated that they can not be reached with bucket in hand. For these, a single engine will suffice. Others, having made greater progress, require two, or more engines. While others--owing to the rapid spread of the flames, the height of the buildings, the narrowness of the streets, or other causes. . . --demand the aid of all the firemen, with all their means. . . .

The progress of the Great Fire of the 16th of December, was owing to several causes. . . . The mischief first commenced in a high building, in a narrow street. But the firemen were on the ground. . . before the flames had made any very extensive progress, But their engines were out of order. . .

. . . . The firemen, unable to be of service in their proper capacity, were employed in saving goods and merchandize from the stores which were next to be burnt.

But even these efforts in many instances. . . were not successful.

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. . . . The fire spread east, west, north, and south at the same time. While one division of its flames was marching towards the East River, another was proceeding towards Broad-Street, another to Wall, and so on.

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Gunpowder was finally employed. . . . Several stores were blown up, in the neighborhood of the fire, so as to. . . make



a vacancy in the line of buildings where the flames were progressing. . . . While to the east, it was only arrested by the river itself. The fire in its whole progress destroyed 654 stores, shops, houses, and public buildings. . . .

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The number of fire companies in New York. . . is 64. Of these, 49 are engine companies; 9, hook-and-ladder; and the remaining 6, hose. Each of these consists of 26 men. . . .